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REGARD TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE
DECLARATION ON THE GRANTING OF
INDEPENDENCE TO COLONIAL COUNTRIES
AND PEOPLES

MILITARY ACTIVITIES AND ARRANGEMENTS BY COLONIAL POWERS IN TERRITORIES UNDER THEIR ADMINISTRATION WHICH MIGHT BE IMPEDING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECLARATION ON THE GRANTING OF INDEPENDENCE TO COLONIAL COUNTRIES AND PEOPLES

BERMUDA

Working paper prepared by the Secretariat

1. Basic infomation on military activities and arrangements in Bermuda is contained in the previous working paper prepared by the Secretariat (A/AC.109/1065). Supplementary information is set out below.

2. Since 31 March 1976, a Senior Resident Naval Officer has represented the Royal Navy of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in Bermuda and has been in charge of a naval dockyard facility, the HMS Malabar. The officer is responsible for administration of the military installation on Ireland Island on behalf of the Commander-in-Chief, Fleet, at Northwood, Middlesex, England, and for coordination of plans of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) for the defence and support of the Territory.

3. The United States of America maintains military installations in Bermuda under the United States Base Agreement of 1941, which is to expire in the year 2040. The two existing facilities, namely, the Naval Air Station at St. George's and the King's Point Naval Station, are operated by the United States Navy. Together they comprise about one tenth of Bermuda's total area. The commanding officer of the Naval Air Station acts as Task Group Commander of anti-submarine warfare in the area surrounding Bermuda, Director of Naval

Shipping and also as United States coordinating authority in Bermuda. He has approximately 1,500 enlisted personnel, including 100 marines, under his command.

4. As stated in the working paper prepared by the Secretariat in 1991 (A/AC.109/1065, para. 6), the Commander of the United States forces in Bermuda had reported that American military strength in the Territory could be reduced by more than 10 per cent with the transfer of 200 military personnel out of the Territory. The reduction of United States military personnel in the Territory could have a negative effect on the local economy, since United States navy personnel and their dependants generate more than US$ 80 million worth of spending annually. 1/ The Commander reaffirmed that maintenance and operation of the Territory's airfield would continue as guaranteed under the terms of the 99-year Leased Bases Agreement, signed by the Governments of the United States and the United Kingdom in 1940.

5. According to press reports in July 1991, work was begun on a multimillion dollar refurbishment project at the United States Naval Air Station. According to the commanding officer of the Air Station, such major improvements were "indicative of the Navy's long-standing commitment to this strategic island". A new three-bay hangar which will house the Navy's PC-3 maritime patrol aircraft is also to be constructed, as well as three workstations, parking for additional aircraft and fuelling facilities. It is estimated that the three-year project would cost between $40 million and $60 million. 2/

6. The National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) of the United States maintains a tracking station on Cooper's Island as part of its world-wide space flight tracking and data network.

7. The Government of Canada maintains military and naval bases at Daniel's Head, Somerset, at the western end of Bermuda.

8. Press reports stated, however, that Sir John Swan had announced in the House of Assembly the intention of the Canadian Government to close its 29-year-old naval base by March 1994 as part of massive reductions in its defence spending. The base, which serves as a communications and research facility, is to be scaled down over a 12-month period before its final closure. 3/

9. According to financial estimates based on a 1987 economic impact study, some 70 local jobs could be affected by the closure, and the Territory's economy could lose more than $7 million a year. The closure could also mean that the West End Development Corporation, which has leased to the Canadian Government 54 houses in the Boaz Island Village for a 32-year period for more than $11 million, could be liable to repay pre-paid rent. Additionally, according to the study, public sector revenue would decrease by $1.2 million and foreign exchange earnings by $3 million. 3/

10. As reported in the 1991 working paper prepared by the Secretariat (A/AC.109/1065, para. 10), discussions were reportedly taking place between defence officials of the United States and the United Kingdom regarding the closure of the United States Naval Annex at Southampton and the establishment of a joint NATO base at the Royal Navy base at HMS Malabar. The NATO base would be used to service and supply NATO vessels that call at Bermuda for repairs, medical attention, refuelling and relaxation. Should the Annex be closed, it could be handed back to Bermuda.

11. It was reported that at a public meeting held in September 1991 on the impact of the NATO base on Bermuda, several persons voiced their concern regarding a lack of consultation of Bermudians over a foreign presence. Mr. Walton Brown, who leads a campaign for the independence of Bermuda, is reported to have expressed concern over the existence of nuclear weapons on the NATO base and the possibility of an accident. 4/

12. According to the same source, Sir John Swan, the Premier, was reported to have stated that in addition to the benefits that accrue to Bermuda's economy, other benefits included a fully maintained airport. The Premier expressed the hope that "this partnership with NATO and the three member nations, namely Britain, America and Canada, will continue making its contribution to Bermuda's economic well-being and to the peace of the world". 4/

13. Speaking to a gathering of parliamentarians in February 1992, the Governor, Sir Desmond Langley, was reported to have stated that Bermuda would remain an important strategic pillar in United States and British defence planning for years to come. The Governor based his assessment in part on the assertion that NATO would continue to be the basis of European security. 5/

14. According to a respected United States author on nuclear weapons research, the announcement by the United States that it would eliminate nuclear depth bombs was most significant for Bermuda. According to the author, "the nuclear function of the bases has been eliminated ... With the elimination of the B-57s, it essentially means that Bermuda - like so many other places around the world - no longer has any role in the nuclear world". The author stated that the only other way in which Bermuda would be involved in United States plans for nuclear war would be as a base for sophisticated communications aircraft that would link Washington with United States nuclear forces at sea. 4/

15. In February 1992, it was reported that the Royal Navy's fast attack nuclear-powered submarine HMS Tireless had berthed in the dockyard at HMS Malabar for a six-day visit to the Territory to allow its crew recreation. Prior to the arrival of the submarine, the Commander of the HMS Malabar is reported to have stated categorically that the submarine would not be carrying weapons and that it had been on an unspecified routine naval exercise. 6/

Notes

1/ One Bermuda dollar ($B 1.00) is equivalent to one United States dollar (US$ 1.00).

2/ The Royal Gazette (Hamilton), 25 July 1991.

3/ Ibid., 2 October 1991.

4/ Ibid., 23 September 1991.

5/ Ibid., 18 February 1992.

6/ Ibid., 8 February 1992.